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One more barrier to peace in Lebanon

*Israel loses ground, Shiites gain martyr in Jbrani*By Curtis Wilkie
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JERUSALEM - By dying the way he did, Khalil Jbrani achieved a martyrdom far more significant than if he had merely turned into a human bomb and flung himself against the Israelis.

Jbrani, a leader of Amal, the Shiite Moslem movement, and an exponent of suicide missions to drive the Israeli army out of southern Lebanon, was killed along with 11 others last Monday when a bomb exploded on the roof of his headquarters in the village of Maarakeh.

A day after his death, tape recordings of Jbrani's fiery speeches were already being broadcast from the loudspeakers of a mosque in his hometown, and crowds were marching in his name in the streets of Beirut and Tyre.

Israel is being blamed for setting the explosion, and Sheikh Mehdi Shamshed-din, the spiritual leader of the Shiites, called for Arabs throughout the Mideast to join in a "jihad" - a holy war - to expel the Israeli army of occupation.

Maarakeh has thus become another tragic way-stop, along with Sabra and Shatila, on a three-year journey that has proved so destructive. In that time, the Israeli adventure has moved in rapid stages from a conflict with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to a misalliance with the Christian Phalangists to what one Israeli calls "a bloody deadlock" with the Shiites of southern Lebanon.

Public support of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon collapsed here within three months, and the time between the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps of Beirut in September 1982 and today has been a period of unrelenting violence and frustration.

Despite the superior firepower of the Israeli army, the invasion has been a losing exercise. Even its stated purpose - to eliminate the presence of the PLO - has

failed in the end. As two respected Israeli journalists, Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, wrote in their powerful book, "Israel's Lebanon War":

"The PLO lost its defended foothold in Beirut. But even in the clamor of the evacuation, it was plain to see that the Palestinians had not been crushed in defeat. The exodus from Beirut augured hard times for [Yasser] Arafat and his men, but they showed no signs of despair or dismay. Already they were weaving a myth of valor around the chapter of the siege, laying the basis for their political and psychological recovery. The 60,000 shells and countless bombs that had rained down on Beirut had not buried the PLO."

After the massacres at Sabra and Shatila by the Phalangists, the Israelis' closest allies in Lebanon, the relationship with the Christian forces deteriorated, and Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon was forced to resign. Though Sharon, the archenemy of the peace movement in Israel, no longer guides the military, it seems that many of his principles are being applied.

New Israeli tack on reprisals

Where Israel once retaliated against PLO attacks by bombing Palestinian refugee camps on the grounds that they were bases for terrorism, the Israeli army is now responding to ambushes by Shiite guerrillas by conducting methodical raids of Shiite villages, usually leaving in their wake a body. The Israeli operations, which have become known as "Iron Fist," have the earmarks of Latin American death squads. Israeli officers insist that the victims are shot while trying to escape interrogation. United Nations troops in the area say the victims are shot in the head.

With each Shiite attack - scores of Israeli soldiers have been killed since the National Resistance Movement, an alliance of Moslem militias, declared war on the army of the occupation more than a

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year ago – and with each Israeli reprisal, the hatred builds.

The Shiite anger reached new heights after the bomb went off in Maarakeh. There is no way to prove who was responsible, though Shiite leaders point out that the Israeli army, accompanied by plainclothes intelligence agents, swept through the town hours before in the most massive raid of "Iron Fist."

Jbrani was 25, a thin man, with a wispy beard and ascetic features who had been a schoolteacher before he took up arms. In an interview with The Globe last month, he talked of the glory of martyr-

dom. His eyes had the look of a man doomed.

Khalil Jbrani, in life as well as death, represents the enormous misunderstanding that has developed between the Israelis and the Shiites. Jbrani could not comprehend why the Israelis wanted to stay in his land. The Israelis have not yet come to grips with a faith that compels members of the Shiite resistance to drive to their own deaths in cars loaded with explosives.

Even before they became open enemies, the Israelis were insensitive to the Shiites, who are the largest population bloc in southern Lebanon. In the fall of

1983, an Israeli military convoy attempted to drive through the middle of a holy procession in Nabatiyeh during the time of "ashura," when Shiite men flog themselves. "It was indicative of the lack of understanding, the lack of interest" on the part of the soldiers, one Israeli official lamented. It created a riot. Within weeks, the Shiites and Israelis were killing one another.

A hardening of attitudes

"It is a genuine tragedy," said Clinton Bailey, who has served as an interlocutor between his government of Israel and the Shiites. "Both sides are in a legitimate quandary." There is, he said, "an Israeli opaqueness in understanding the importance of the Shiites" coupled with "a lack of responsibility in the Shiite community" to reach an agreement with the Israelis.

The "opaqueness" is perhaps demonstrated by the words of Uri Lubrani, the coordinator of Israeli activities in southern Lebanon. In denying Israeli complicity in the bombing at Maarakeh, he attributed the deaths to "an inside struggle within Amal." In fact, Maarakeh – a tough, grim and tightly disciplined controlled village – appears more united behind Amal than any other location in the country.

In an earlier interview with the Israeli newspaper, Ma'ariv, Lubrani failed to make a distinction between Amal and the more radical Shiite force, Hezbollah (party of god). "In my opinion, Shiite terrorism will follow us. . . Such terrorism derives the majority of its motivations from religious-messianic Shiite values, with its final goal being Jerusalem and not the northern settlements."

Hezbollah, a much smaller force, is linked to the Iranian Islamic revolution, and its goal is, indeed, to claim Jerusalem. Amal, however, has as its goal a restoration of Lebanese sovereignty with rights for all religious groups. Amal leaders never expressed an interest in Jerusalem, and until "Iron Fist" began last month, they swore that they only wanted Israel to leave their country. Now they have vowed to attack the Galilee, and once they are able to bring heavy weapons south from Beirut into artillery range, they are likely to do so.

"What is happening," said Bailey, Israel's leading authority on the Shiites, "is that the continuing friction with Israel is making people more extreme. They are now ready to cross over the line, to say we have nothing to lose, let's have a jihad."